

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
JULY 13, 2000

## MEDIA ADVISORY

### DOMENICI TO RELEASE GAO REPORT ON RADIATION PROTECTION

### NEWS CONFERENCE

11:30 a.m., Friday, July 14  
Room 366, Dirksen Senate Office Building

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici on Friday will release the results of a General Accounting Office (GAO) study he requested last year to update a 1994 study on radiation protection standards in the United States.

Domenici, chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee and a member of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, will announce the findings at a news conference at **11:30 a.m., Friday, in Room 366 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building.**

Last July, Domenici asked that the GAO's 1994 report, "Consensus on Acceptable Radiation Risk to the Public Is Lacking" (GAO/RCED-94-190), be updated and suggested areas for investigation. The request was made to David A. Walker, Comptroller General of the United States, U.S. General Accounting Office.

In making that request, Domenici cited his concerns about the cost impact of the so-called *linear no threshold hypothesis* (LNTH) as it is applied to radiation protection standards in the United States. The LNTH assumes that any amount of radiation, regardless of how small, can cause health effects such as cancer. This theory forms the basis of all radiation protection standards, and results in regulations that limit radiation to people to very low levels.

- Domenici asked that the GAO give particular attention to these questions:
- ! How have radiation standards changed since 1994? Is a consensus being approached, and what has resulted from the recommendations in that report?
  - ! What were the bases for setting the radiation protection limits, and how is the linear no threshold hypothesis used in setting these limits?
  - ! If differences exist between agencies' standards, what is the impact of these differences?
  - ! Provide, from available data, information on the variance in background radiation between locations in the United States and around the world. Are differences in cancer rates between these locations related to differences in background radiation levels?
  - ! What are the costs of complying with current radiation protection regulations, and how, if at all, would these costs be affected if radiation standards were substantially relaxed?

Congress has provided funding to begin determining the cellular and biological effects of low-level radiation--the sort nuclear power plant and clean-up workers are exposed to--in order to develop appropriate radiation protection standards.